



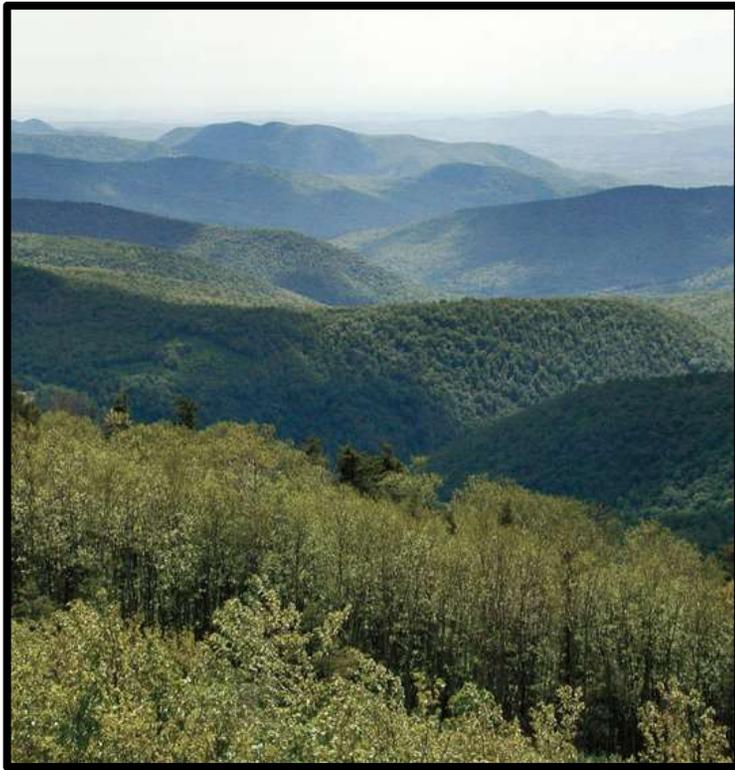
House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry: Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative

March 14, 2023



Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

Statutory Purpose



Equinox Highlands in Bennington County
Among 450,000 acres conserved since 1987

“the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and **conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.**”

10 V.S.A.15 §302



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Eligible Uses:

- (C) the protection of important wildlife habitat and important natural areas;
- (E) the protection of areas suited for outdoor public recreational activity;
- (F) the protection of lands for multiple conservation purposes, including the protection of surface waters and associated natural resources;

Allocation System:

- (1) the need to maintain balance between the dual goals in allocating resources;
- (2) the need for a timely response to unpredictable circumstances or special opportunities to serve the purposes of this chapter;
- (3) the level of funding or other participation by private or public sources in the activity being considered for funding by the Board;

Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative: Goals



Brownsville Forest, Stowe, Vermont

Working with conservation partners, public land managers, and public stakeholders

VHCB will facilitate a public process to prioritize conservation actions and investments in a statewide conservation plan

To position Vermont to maximize Federal, State and private resources and direct work over the next thirty years

To protect, maintain and enhance a healthy, ecologically connected and functioning, natural and working landscape.

Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative: Partners and Stakeholders

Initial Partners, Summer and Fall 2022:

- Vermont ANR and AAFM
- The Nature Conservancy
- Vermont Land Trust
- Trust for Public Land
- Vermont Audubon



Public Stakeholders, 2023 – 24:

- Public and private land managers, land trusts, and funders
- Farm, forest and recreation land owners
- Representatives from working lands enterprises
- Conservation policy and environmental justice advocates
- Indigenous groups and representatives from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities
- Outdoor recreation organizations
- Municipalities, conservation commissions, grass roots initiatives, and other groups who support and benefit from conservation investments



Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative: Phase I, Spring and Summer 2023

- Establish a baseline catalog, inventory and analysis of the current state and degrees of durable “conservation” in Vermont, based on existing data;
- Catalog conservation outcomes across different categories of land and water protected, acreage in different categories, tools and strategies, and different funding programs;
- Organize the data collected in a spatially explicit and shareable format;
- Identify and articulate data gaps within the catalog;
- Recommend system improvements to maintain and update data consistently and accurately into the future; and
- Outreach and education, including publication and dissemination of the work completed in Phase I.



**Observatory Knob
St. Johnsbury, Vermont**

Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative: Phase II, Summer 2023 to Fall 2024

Develop and adopt a statewide conservation plan, in order to:



**Donegan Farm
Hinesburg and Charlotte, VT**

- Increase the rate and quality of conservation work
- Build partner and agency capacity to acquire, hold and steward conserved land
- Provide detailed science- and values-based goals and priorities for conservation actions and investments in Vermont over the next thirty years
- Identify new and existing strategies and tools for conservation actions, climate resilience, and increased equitable access and environmental justice.

In addition to land protection goals and priorities, the plan will identify:

- Costs of implementation
- Revenue options and funding opportunities

Vermont Conservation Strategy Initiative: Existing Strategies are the Foundation

- Vermont Conservation Design
- Vermont Climate Action Plan
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' Forest Action Plan and Wildlife Action Plan, and Forest Future Roadmap Initiative
- The Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Landscapes Tool
- Trust for Public Land's Return on Investment Study
- TMDLs, Basin Plans and other water quality planning tools



**Hughs-Muse Farm
Pawlet, VT**

Trey Martin
Director of Conservation
and Rural Community
Development

